

The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden



Dorothy Walton Binder

Dorothy Walton married Carroll Binder on May 24, 1920, the couple having met while they were serving in the Red Cross, working with Belgian refugees during WWI. They both pursued journalism as a career, and after a few short stints at different newspapers, including the *Minneapolis Daily Star*, they ended up in Chicago in the 1920s where Dorothy wrote articles for *The New Majority*, a labor newspaper and Carroll worked as an editor for the *Chicago Daily News* under Frank Knox. One of Dorothy's articles "The Stockwells of Minnesota" appeared in the *New Republic* on Dec. 22, 1937. Dorothy was especially active in the National Council of Jewish Women, of which she was president (1932-1937).



Old 1959 newspaper photo: Dorothy Binder on the left with just retired Garden Curator Martha Crone.

The Binders had four children. Their eldest son Lt. Carroll Binder Jr. died in WWII, lost at sea when his B-17, on which he was navigator, crashed in the English Channel when returning from a Berlin raid. The family was unable to verify his demise for months causing great trauma for the family. After the war it was found that his body had been recovered by a German fisherman and buried in France by the German authorities.

There were three other children, daughter Mary Kelsey Binder, born in 1923 and twins David and Debby born in 1931, in London where the Binders were working for the *Daily News*. They returned to Chicago in late 1931 but after the *Daily News* changed ownership in 1944 with the death of Frank Knox (who was Secretary of the Navy at the time), the Binders moved to Minneapolis in 1945 to work for the *Minneapolis Tribune*, Carroll becoming editorial page editor.

Dorothy was a founding Director of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden in 1952 and remained on the Board until 1964 after which she was an ex-officio honorary director until 1976. During her tenure she was Vice-President from 1952 until the death of Clinton Odell in June 1958, when she became President, serving in that role until January 1962.

In 1974 Friends President Cay Faragher received a letter from Dorothy and she informed the Friends as follows:

"Mrs. Carroll Binder, past President of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, has maintained her active interest in the "Garden" since its inception. A long letter from her brings us up to date. Mrs. Binder, with daughter, Debby moved to Oakland, Calif., in 1971, where she has successfully battled her Parkinson's disease with the magic drug EeDopa. In spite of other problems plus a cataract operation, she has been finishing her husband's "papers" as well as those of her father for the Minnesota Historical Society. Her daughter Mary Kelsey [Mikkelson] and husband are in Oakland, and their four grown children are a great source of pleasure with their brilliant careers. The highlight of this year was a fall

trip to Washington, D.C., to see son Dave and family, just the returned from six years in Germany with New York Times. After some moving about, Mrs. Binder is now settled at the Mark Twain Mrs. Retirement Center, 2438 35th Ave. Oakland California 94601”

In 1978, when she was 84, the Friends were still receiving donations from her from California. That was our last communication from her. She passed away on June 14, 1980 at age 86 in a hospital in nearby San Leandro CA. Her papers are included with her husbands at the Newberry Library in Chicago.

She wrote a few things for us that were published in the *Fringed Gentian*TM.

On the death of Clinton Odell she wrote:

“With the death of Mr. Clinton M. Odell June 4th at the age of 80, the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden have lost their founder, their president and their most devoted and enthusiastic member.

All his life Mr. Odell had been concerned with conservation. He was awarded the plaque of the Minnesota Conservation Commission April 1957 in recognition of his many contributions. His interest in the Wild Flower Garden began in his high school days for Eloise Butler was his botany teacher.

For many years Mr. Odell contributed privately to the Park Board's limited funds for maintenance of the garden. He was responsible for development of the Upper Garden, for the fence surrounding this garden and for the employment of extra manpower. Often Mr. Odell could be found in the Wild Flower Garden in his spare time digging weeds and helping Mrs. Crone the Curator with new plantings. He preferred this to playing golf with his friends.

With the future of the garden in mind Mr. Odell was instrumental in organizing the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden in the summer of 1952. He was its president until his death. It was his dearest wish that the Friends would guarantee the continuance of the garden in the event of his death. Membership fees and donations would supplement the allocations of the Park Board and would continue the unique contribution the Wild Flower Garden makes to Minneapolis.

The future of the Wild Flower Garden now lies with the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden. The memorial which would mean most to the man who gave so much of his time, his devotion and his money to the development of the Wild Flower Garden as a sanctuary and an educational project for Minneapolis is its continuance. Two or three years of neglect because of insufficient maintenance and the garden would be an overgrown mass of weeds, its significance lost, the labor of year destroyed. The challenge now lies with us.” [Vol. 6 no. 3, Summer 1958]

When George Luxton (Gardening editor of the Minneapolis Tribune) died she wrote this letter to the editor:

“The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden is one of the many groups which will sadly miss George Luxton. He was one of the best friends the garden had from its inception. He came there often himself and whenever he wrote appreciatively of it in his column an influx of visitors followed, I doubt whether any single person has been more influential in bringing this unique garden to the attention of nature lovers, not only in the Twin Cities area but from many other states, as well as far away lands. When spring comes again and once more we are walking along the woodland paths of this charming area, many of us will be thinking of the man who was the friend of all gardens and this one in particular.” - Dorothy Walton Binder. [Vol. 11 No. 1, Jan. 1963]